

## *Radio Stamps*

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### **Program 45 - December 3, 1994**

Hello again, and welcome to *Radio Stamps*. A special welcome, as always, if you're listening to the program for the first time. You're tuned to the monthly show that's all about the fun of collecting postage stamps on the topic of radio. This program combines the fun of listening to international radio and collecting stamps from around the world all about radio. There are dozens of radio subjects you can collect on stamps, from international stations, like HCJB, to radio listening. Collecting stamps on the topic of radio is another great way to enjoy the radio hobby.

This is program number 45. The topic is radio pioneers on stamps, and I have a collecting tip, as well as a travel tip for you today from Canada, about the world famous inventor Marconi. Marconi's work in wireless radio in Canada is commemorated by the Marconi Trail coastal highway and a special commemorative postage stamp.

Away back in August, our family went on a summer camping trip through the maritime provinces of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, on the eastern coast of Canada. Along the way we stopped at some famous radio sites. Our first visit was at Sackville in New Brunswick, on the Trans-Canada Highway near the Nova Scotia border, at the shortwave transmitting station of Radio Canada International. The inauguration of the RCI station was commemorated by Canada on June 1st, 1971, with a colourful postage stamp. If you missed last month's program, this commemorative stamp has a denomination of \$0.15. It was issued both with and without luminescent tagging. The Scott catalogue number for this unique issue is 541.

Our second stop was on Cape Breton Island, in north-eastern Nova Scotia, at the town of Louisbourg, along the Atlantic coast. The town is famous now for the Fortress Louisbourg National Historic Park, Canada's most ambitious outdoor museum. In 1913, the small fishing village of Louisbourg was the site of an extensive receiving station for Marconi's trans-Atlantic radio service.

Marconi began experimenting with radio communication in 1895 at the age of twenty. In December 1901 he transmitted the first radio signals across the Atlantic Ocean, from Cornwall, England, to St. John's, Newfoundland, at Signal Hill. In 1902, he built a station on Cape Breton Island, in Nova Scotia, at Table Head in Glace Bay. From here he transmitted the first complete radio messages across the Atlantic Ocean. The first twenty-four hour commercial service began in 1907 between his powerful new stations at Marconi Towers, near Glace Bay, and at Clifden, Ireland. This was extended to a simultaneous two-way service with the opening of receiving stations at Louisbourg, Nova Scotia, and at Letterfrack, Ireland in 1913. The service was phased out in the 1930s and replaced by more modern technology.

Now the great stations are just a memory, but this milestone in the history of communications is commemorated in Canada by the Marconi Trail coastal highway, that links the three Marconi station sites, and by the Marconi National Historic Site at Table Head, operated by the Canadian Parks Service.

At Louisbourg, the Marconi receiving station had six towers, each 330 feet high, which supported an aerial wire nearly a mile long. This antenna was aligned approximately east-west to receive high speed signals from Ireland. The radio signals in Morse code were recorded on cylindrical records and played back at slower speeds, for typing and transmission overland by telegraph. The site of the Louisbourg station is now the Marconi Tower picnic area in the Fortress Louisbourg National Historic Park. The driveway into the picnic area was the main driveway through the station. All that is left today of this historic site is the concrete tower bases and the guy wire anchors. Many thanks to Eugene Magee, Curator at the S & L Railway Museum in Louisbourg, for information about the Marconi station. If you travel to Louisbourg, I recommend that you stop at the Railway Museum, meet Eugene and see the exhibits.

Our third stop, at the other end of the Marconi Trail coastal highway, was at the Marconi National Historic Site in Glace Bay. The site includes a visitor center with exhibits, and an interpretive walking trail. There is a detailed model at the visitor center of the 1902 Table Station, and an operating amateur radio station that maintains the memory of Marconi's "Voice of the Atlantic Seaboard. The call letters of the ham station are VA1 VAS, Victor Alfa 1 Victor Alpha Sierra. The free map of the Marconi Trail and the brochure for the Marconi National Historic Site both include photos of Marconi and his stations. For more information about the Marconi radio stations in Canada, you can write to Henry Bradford, spelled B-r-a-d-f-o-r-d, Marconi Towers Foundation, R.R. 2, Wolfville, spelled W-o-l-f-v-i-l-l-e, Nova Scotia. The postal code in Canada is B0P 1X0. The address again is Henry Bradford, Marconi Towers Foundation, R.R. 2, Wolfville, Nova Scotia, B0P 1X0, Canada.

On the collecting side, the centenary of Marconi's birth was commemorated by Canada on November 15, 1974, with an amazing postage stamp. It has a denomination of \$0.08 and features a portrait of Marconi, with a green head, against the stylized and multi-coloured background of Signal Hill, at St. John's in Newfoundland. The Scott catalogue number of this psychedelic stamp is 6-5-4, six hundred fifty-four. It would certainly make a very colourful addition to your collection of radio pioneers on stamps.

Well, that's all for today's program. Your comments and suggestions are always welcome. I hope too that you'll write with news. Here's my mailing address. Neil Carleton, that's spelled N-e-i-l C-a-r-l-e-t-o-n, P.O. Box 1644, Almonte, spelled A-l-m-o-n-t-e, Ontario, spelled O-n-t-a-r-i-o. The postal code here in Canada is K0A 1A0. The address again is Neil Carleton, P.O. Box 1644, Almonte, Ontario, K0A 1A0, Canada. Until the next time, best wishes for good listening and collecting.